

in developing countries, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 4287

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, Senator HELMS has an amendment at the desk, and I ask for its consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Ohio [Mr. DEWINE], for Mr. HELMS, proposes an amendment numbered 4287.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The text of the amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Amendments Submitted.")

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I am pleased the Senate is considering the "Microenterprise for Self-Reliance Act"—legislation that would ensure the continuation of international microenterprise grant and loan programs that are administered worldwide by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). This is legislation that I introduced last year, along with Senators BINGAMAN, CHAFEE, DURBIN, KENNEDY, SCHUMER, TORRICELLI, BOXER, COLLINS, FEINSTEIN, MIKULSKI, and SNOWE. Representatives BEN GILMAN of New York and SAM GEJDENSON of Connecticut introduced a similar measure, which the House approved last year.

I thank the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Senator HELMS, and ranking member of the committee, Senator BIDEN, and the committee staff for their cooperation and insistence on this legislation. My staff and I have been working closely with these offices since last fall as well as with the administration and the Microenterprise Coalition. I thank Chairman GILMAN and the House International Relations Committee staff for their ongoing cooperation and support of this initiative.

We believe the investment in microenterprise programs that we are now investing will reduce the need for foreign assistance in the future. By passing the Microenterprise Self-Reliance Act, the Senate has a chance to ensure the future of these very successful programs and help provide a sense of hope and a future of possibilities for the poor in developing countries.

I thank my colleagues for their support of this legislation and I look forward to the continued success of the microenterprise programs.

I ask unanimous consent that the substitute amendment be agreed to, the bill be read the third time and passed, as amended, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 4287) was agreed to.

The bill (H.R. 1143), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The absence of a quorum has been suggested. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to talk about comments that have been made, both on the floor and off the floor, with regard to the job that the distinguished Senator from Utah, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Mr. HATCH, has been doing in regard to judicial nominations. I rise today to commend my colleague for the outstanding work he has done in regard to these nominations.

Make no mistake about it, this is tough work. No one who has not had the opportunity to watch this from a close point of view, to see it up close and personal, really has any idea what kind of effort Senator HATCH has made to make sure nominees who come to this floor have been examined very closely and very carefully. It is proper; it is correct that this be done. No one can do a better job at this than Senator ORRIN HATCH. I have watched him, day after day, in his examination and his staff's examination and work on people who have been nominated to the judicial bench. I must say he does a tremendous job.

Senate consideration of judicial nominations is always difficult. It is always contentious. That is just the nature of the business. Yet in this Congress, under the guidance of Chairman HATCH, the Senate has confirmed 69 Federal judicial nominations—69, for those who offer criticism. Mr. President, 35 of these nominees have been confirmed earlier this year, and we have just confirmed 4 more. Yet not only has the chairman been criticized for nominees who are still pending in the Judiciary Committee, he has even been criticized for nominees who have already been confirmed; that is, nominees who are now serving, today, this very day, as Federal judges. Chairman HATCH has been criticized for not moving those nominees fast enough. I strongly disagree. I believe the chairman has done an outstanding job, a fine job. I wanted to come to the floor this afternoon to say that.

I would like to talk about the confirmation process for a moment because, again, I think many times people really don't understand what this process entails—or at least what it entails when the chairman is doing a good job. I think an explanation of the process may help those who are listening to the debate today understand

why some of the delays in confirmation of judicial nominees occur.

The President has very broad discretion, as we know, to nominate whom-ever he chooses for Federal judicial vacancies. The Senate, in its role, has a constitutional duty to offer its "advice and consent" on judicial nominations. Each Senator, of course, has his or her own criteria for offering this advice and this consent on these lifetime appointments.

The Judiciary Committee, though, is where many of the initial concerns about nominees are raised and arise. Often these concerns arise before a hearing is even scheduled. Judicial nominees are required to respond to a very lengthy and a very detailed questionnaire from the Judiciary Committee. They must submit copies of every document they have ever published, any writing they have ever published, and provide copies of every speech they have ever given. If they have previously served as a judge, they must provide information regarding opinions they authored.

There are various background checks conducted on each nominee. Sometimes outside individuals or organizations provide the committee with information about a nominee. Sometimes that information from outside groups comes very early in the process. But sometimes, quite candidly, it comes later on. Each time it comes in, the committee, committee staff, and ultimately the chairman must review that information.

All of this information is, of course, available to every member of the Judiciary Committee and must be thoroughly reviewed before the nominee is granted a hearing by the committee. If questions about a nominee's background or qualifications arise, further inquiry may be necessary. The chairman will schedule a hearing for a nominee only after thorough review of a nominee's preliminary information. At the hearing, a nominee has an opportunity to respond to any remaining concerns about his or her record. But even after a hearing, sometimes followup questions are necessary to properly examine issues regarding the nominee's qualifications. Obviously, this is a long process, as it should be—as it must be. After all, these are lifetime appointments. These judges will have a tremendous impact on how our laws are interpreted and enforced.

Some nominees, of course, have clear records of achievement and superb qualifications. These nominees often move through the committee and to the Senate floor very quickly. Other nominees have records that are really not quite so clear. These nominees take more time for additional investigation and careful consideration. If a nominee is nominated late in a Congress, and that nominee has questions raised about his or her background or qualifications, it is more likely that his nomination will not be considered by the Senate.

If nominees were only considered in the order they were nominated, the process would, of course, grind to a halt. We have heard some comments about that. Some people have argued this is a queuing up process; we just queue up whoever is next in line; they should go next on the Senate floor. But we know that cannot happen. If nominees were only considered in the order they were nominated, the process would grind to a halt as more qualified nominees would back up behind questionable nominees.

I believe, if it were not for ORRIN HATCH's efforts, there would have been far fewer judges confirmed during this session of the Congress. But I am also sure that if ORRIN HATCH had not been chairman, other questionable nominations would have been made. Because of this man's integrity, because of this man's honesty, because of this man's proven track record, and because he takes his job so seriously, I am convinced that certain nominations this White House might have considered making simply were never made and were never submitted.

I commend Senator HATCH for his efforts in moving the nominees along, but also for his efforts in doing a thorough and complete job. I am very proud to have ORRIN HATCH as chairman of this committee. We are very honored to have him serve in that capacity.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to proceed as in morning business for up to 7 minutes to discuss digital mammography.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NATIONAL MAMMOGRAPHY DAY

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, we are now in the midst of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and the air has been filled with new and sometimes confusing statistics, new treatment, new research advances, and ever-present warnings about the seriousness of this dreaded disease.

One aspect of this issue that is close to my heart is National Mammography Day—a day to increase awareness of how routine periodic mammography and early diagnosis of breast cancer are responsible for huge increases in the numbers of long-term survivors of this disease.

I note parenthetically that my wife started an organization in my State to increase awareness—it is named after her, not me—called the BIDEN Breast Health Initiative, where she and her

group of advisers bring oncology nurses and oncologists into the local high schools throughout the State to make young women in high school aware of breast health examinations and self-examination because the key to survival is early detection.

Breast cancer is now an illness not to be feared as a death sentence but to be conquered commonly and routinely. This year, National Mammography Day, which I sponsored years ago, will occur on Friday, October 20. As in previous years, the Senate has adopted a resolution that I introduced affirming this designation.

This year's National Mammography Day will see the beginning of a tremendous new advance in early detection of breast cancer—digital mammography. This new technique offers many advantages over standard film-based mammography. From the patient's point of view, the usual 40-minute examination time can be cut in half, and the exposure to radiation can be reduced in almost all instances.

For many women, the mammogram images with digital technology are considerably more precise. The digital technology makes it possible for the radiologist to manipulate the images and to zoom in on questionable areas, thus providing more accurate diagnosis in reducing the need for repeat examinations.

The digital technology does away with the cost and the disposal problems as well of x-ray film.

In addition, the retrieval of prior film for comparison with current images no longer require the time-consuming manual search through an x-ray room.

Finally, by switching to the digital approach, this new technique allows all future advances in digital computer technology to be applied directly to saving women from breast cancer.

It is impossible, in my view, to overstate the importance of this digital technique's adaptability to new technological advances. Those of us old enough to remember how the first personal computers were a huge advance over the slide rule are also aware of how the incredible subsequent advances in computer technology meant that those first PCs were now useful only as doorstops. I look forward to a similarly rapid advance in the new digital technology as it moves into the field of breast cancer diagnosis.

Digital mammography is a revolutionary technology that must be offered to seniors and disabled who obtain their medical care through Medicare. And it should be done as soon as possible. I strongly encourage the Health Care Financing Administration to evaluate this product expeditiously and to set appropriate payment rates under the Medicare program.

What I don't want to see happen—I realize this may seem somewhat premature—is that digital mammography is only available for those who are able to pay, while all those on Medicare or

Medicaid, because the reimbursement cost is not sufficient to cover a digital mammography, will have to settle for what will prove to be an inferior test. The lives of many women who have yet to discover they have breast cancer may hang in the balance.

Therefore, I look forward to HCFA establishing a reasonable price at which reimbursement can be made under Medicare for those women on Medicare or Medicaid who seek a breast examination by use of digital mammography, the new emerging science, rather than one that is film based.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the conference report to accompany the Interior appropriations bill, and the conference report be considered as having been read.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 4578) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes, having met, have agreed that the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate, and agree to the same with an amendment and the Senate agree to the same, signed by all of the conferees on the part of both Houses.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of September 29, 2000.)

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I say to those who are interested, we are going to the report, but there is no time agreement to run off. Nobody has given up their rights in that regard, but we are now going to be able to proceed to the conference report, and we will continue to work on the issues that are of interest to Senators.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now be in a period for morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.